Community Health Fund
John Muir Health Building Bridges to Better Health

The CHF's Commitment to Addressing the Effects of Racism on Health

The CHF is a learning organization.

We learn from our nonprofit partners, who have built trusted relationships in our Central and East Contra Costa County communities. We learn from listening to people, young and old, living in and serving our communities. This is how we deepen our understanding of the root causes of health disparities and health inequities and why we've come to believe addressing those root causes is the most effective way to have a lasting and positive impact on health and health care for all.

Our understanding of root causes continues to evolve as we understand more about the current and historical effects of systemic racism on health. Consider that in nearly every community of every kind, Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals typically have worse health outcomes than their neighbors. One example among many: Despite an active effort to close the equity gap in vaccination rates in Contra Costa County, the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionally impacted communities of color, low-wage essential workers, seniors, and other historically disadvantaged populations. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the COVID-19 case rates for African Americans are over twice that of Whites, and for Latinos are 2.6 times that of non-Hispanic Whites.

The systemic racism that drives such disparities touches all of us. Certainly, we have a responsibility to serve any group that experiences health inequities tied to any social determinant of health, including racism; unfortunately, many groups share those experiences. But what we now know about the connections between health and BIPOC individuals in our Central and East Contra Costa communities teaches us that we cannot transform the health of our communities without focusing on the health inequities related to systemic racism.

Despite the CHF's proud history of partnering to improve the health and health care of under-resourced communities, this statement on racial equity is our first formal step toward *explicitly* addressing the role of systemic racism. As such, it is a way to help our communities and nonprofit partners better understand our values – and it is much more. It is a way to invite our friends, neighbors and partners to have a voice in ensuring that our grantmaking addresses the devastating effects of systemic racism on individual and population health. And it is an essential tool to hold us accountable for giving our partners the resources they need to do just that.

To those ends, we make the following three commitments.

Commitment One: ***Our grantmaking will recognize and meaningfully act on the fact that systemic racism persists and is an important driver of health disparities and inequitable health care.***

- Our board and staff will undergo training in anti-racism.
- We will incorporate in our guidelines that grantees must include a description of how they are specifically meeting the needs of BIPOC populations in the development of their initiative.
- Our board and staff will find ways to understand the demographics of all those served by our grants and to use that information to reduce the effects of systemic racism on health while protecting the privacy of individuals accessing services.

Commitment Two: ***To craft initiatives that optimally address the effects of systemic racism on health in our resilient, but under-resourced communities, we will continue to build on the the trust of the people who live in our communities by forging lasting collaborations with them.***

- We will identify and invest in a network of community voices and partners – a Community Advisory Council composed of people of different races, cultures and life circumstances – who understand the often unspoken codes, mores and lived experiences of our communities.
    - This group's primary initial responsibility will be to advise us on what they would like to see measured that indicates we are making meaningful progress on addressing the effects of systemic racism on health in East and Central Contra Costa County.
- During the planning process before issuing grants, we will gather input from and fairly compensate our community partners and resident leaders to help ensure we are meeting the community's highest priority health-related needs in the most effective and sensitive ways possible.

Commitment Three: ***Words matter. Accountable actions matter more, so we will use these commitments as a guide in all of our work, document how our work addresses systemic racism and make those reports available to the public so our communities can assess the impact of our efforts.***

- We will seek ways to continue to partner with other organizations dedicated to social justice, health equity and addressing the social determinants of health in the areas we serve.
- We will issue an annual report that documents the work we have done to address the effects of systemic racism.